

OD meeting notes from 6/25/2014

Notetaker: Lisa Mitchell

INFORMATION

Director's Report - Mark

Mark updated the group on several items.

Discussion:

#1. National TACE center – The National TACE Center will go from 10 centers down to one National Center that will serve 16 agencies. They are going with a jobs center type of program that will provide training and disability services to employers and work on building relationships with employers. The message is clear they will now be more employer focused and meet demands of employer needs. They will help agencies to build our skills so we can do what we need to do with clients to get into those jobs. Many of our programs through VR such as MI, BA, Autism are all supported by TACE, so this will create a change for us. The National TACE might choose Nebraska as one of the agencies because we have an emphasis on certificate model. This change will take place in October.

#2. Mark also discussed the Re-Authorization. It is felt that it will be passed by the Senate and House and signed by the President by the 4th of July. There are a lot of changes that this will create, especially within Transition, Placement, Supported Employment, and Cooperative Agreements. The Re-Auth will move some agencies (ATP, IL) over to HHS federally but we should not see a change in how that agency operates or how we work with them. The Re-Auth has a huge emphasis on outcomes/getting clients jobs. Outcomes for people with disabilities have not been good nationally and the numbers of people with disabilities achieving employment outcomes has not changed significantly in the past 30 years. The Act is seeking to address this issue.

Next Step:

We will wait until the Bill passes and once that happens we will spend time figuring out how to implement the changes and how we will move forward as a State.

ACTION

#1. May 2014 VR Eval Training on Autism...Keri

Discussion:

Every office had representatives at the training on May 13/14. The evaluations from the training all had great responses. There will be a follow up on some of the different activities. This was funded by TACE and grant money so we will have some follow up activities planned to continue to build the relationships that were developed between agencies and ESU/School representatives.

Keri had Scott look at RSA data on autism – the data he pulled was from 2009-2012. Data indicates that NE VR is serving a smaller % than other states are serving. We have a higher average of higher functioning individuals with autism than those in other states. Keri looked at 2013-2014 QE2 data and is not sure that is really the case.

Next Step:

Keri is going to continue to compare data from RSA and QE2

We need to use the grant so that we can strengthen staff skills with ASD -- especially those that are lower functioning. Every office now has a SSQ kit, which is a good eval tool for those with ASD.

We need to strengthen community connections so we can increase referrals.

We need to increase staff confidence with serving ASD.

Offices need to work on finding local opportunities for groups to meet again and work together so that we can tap into their expertise and they can tap into ours. We need to make sure that we are aware of those individuals in our community and we should reach out to them and look at ways we can work more closely together. A key person is the Autism Network Coordinator.

#2. 30-day contact -- Brigid

Brigid has had suggestions from her team several times on how could we flag on our flow sheets when the last contact was with the client. It would be nice if we could see it quickly and easily all at once when we are using the flow sheets to make sure that we are staying on top of things.

Discussion:

In order for QE2 to do this then any sort of 30 day contact would have either have a specific task would say 30 day contact or maybe another way – If we only just had last task, that might be an authorization or nothing tied to actually having contact with a client.

Next Step:

This will be added to the TO DO list of activities for QE2 programmers to work on and develop.

DISCUSSION

#1. Resume VC Meetings with Office Directors – Melanee/Brigid

Discussion:

It was felt that this was already addressed when we discussed #4 below. We will likely be increasing meetings with OD's and PD's given the changes from the Re-Authorization.

Next Step:

Increase OD meetings but have them be more targeted meetings working on a specific item.

#2. Mentoring Training for Evaluators – Janet/Elaine

The Evaluator committee felt the need to develop something that would help new evaluators acclimate to the job – They wanted to establish a program where new evaluators work with seasoned evaluators --

Discussion:

Janet and Elaine discussed the mentoring program and pointed out the benefits for both the new evaluator and the seasoned evaluator. There are certain criteria that have to be met to be considered as a mentor. They felt this is a way that both the mentor and mentee can learn while in the process.

Next Step:

Training will take place for anyone interested in becoming a mentor and for Office/Program Directors that wish to sit in on July 10th.

#3. How is flexible scheduling working for the offices? - Brigid

Brigid was wondering if flexible scheduling and having several staff off on Fridays is affecting the offices in anyway. How do they handle it if clients only want to meet at certain times or on certain days that would not match the staff person's calendar?

Discussion:

Several OD's offered comments regarding this such as...

Staff like the flexibility -- and being able to meet earlier and later with clients.

At times scheduling group/team meetings with a particular client is more difficult but important that staff remain flexible.

Grand Island office has only one person who uses flex scheduling so they don't see many issues.

Friday very quiet/slow days -- It is expected that staff meet client needs and that the staff schedule needs to work around that and meetings first.

Most staff wanted to work 7:30 – 4:00 shift so it has been difficult working around that.

For those staff that work 4 (10) hour days they had them flex the day off during the week so not everyone is off on Fridays.

Next Step:

OD's need to continue to monitor the flexible scheduling to ensure that client needs are being met and that the office is being covered sufficiently.

#4. Team Model -- role of Program Directors and Office Directors - Mark

What is their role with training and technical support? With the focus on employers in the Re-authorization Act how will that change our outlook on our roles?

Discussion:

In listening to proposed changes I think we need to change the structure of our meetings. More in person meetings as OD's and PD's maybe even on a monthly basis. Looking at the changes it needs to be an in person discussion.

In regards to roles of OD/PD some are using things we had from before. We need to set up a meeting to just focus on our roles and the perceptions of what our role is now.

Felt confused about the role of PD -- We need a better understanding of PD's day-to-day work and goals so that we have a better idea of how we can utilize their expertise with staff.

We should look at what our roles should be not look at what our roles are now.

With new legislation we need to change what we are doing and determine roles on how we will support the new goals.

Look at Training Committee -- we will have some really different positions going ahead and so job descriptions and duties will be new -- one size fits all will not work anymore when it comes to training.

Gordon has come to miss arguments and disagreements because it made such a difference in coming back to local offices with making the change -- it was good to hear the argument both good and bad and be able to come back and know all that went into the decision.

Next step:

Wait until we have the new law; then all sorts of discussion will develop from there -- clearly we will have to start meeting sooner rather than later. Once timeline is established then we will set up meetings and begin those discussions and talk about roles and responsibilities.

#5. Program Manual Chapters and Form Development – Mark

Sheri Nitzsche sent an email in June about a new VRIS format that she is working on and Mark wanted feedback.

Discussion:

OD's seemed to really like the new format and like that it is easier to navigate and do searches as well. Felt like it was more organized too!

Next Step:

Sheri will continue to work on the format and will hopefully have it ready in the near future to put out to staff. Please continue to offer her any feedback or comments you have.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS ADDED ON TO THE ORIGINAL AGENDA

#1. RULE 72 and changes – Cheryl

Cheryl and other staff have worked on proposed changes for Rule 72 that they shared with the group. Cheryl went into specifics of document that was emailed.

Discussion:

Re-auth will bring on additional changes right now we are only talking about the current changes but just know others will be in store.

Most changes are clarifying policy and updating the fee schedule. We may do this Rule

change now and then when the Re-Authorization is official, we will make additional changes later on.

The document emailed to us only shows the new verbiage, we would need to compare that document to current rule.

If an item was taken out of Rule 72 we would just pay it at the price the person sets for it -- example tutor not in rule so we would negotiate price for that.

Next Step:

OD's need to spend time comparing both documents with team to see what changes are being proposed. Items listed below are ones to pay close attention to and Cheryl would like feedback on. Also would like to know what else needs to be changed?

Timeline: Nothing will go into place for sure until the new bill passes so we can see what implications that has for us -- once we know that then we start process of taking it to the board, public hearing, etc...We have until July 31st to provide our feedback.

***Voc Training -- exceptions....need help on how to make it more clear -- give what exceptions could be made.

***Cash advance -- based on legal recommendations they would say primary method would be that we paid the provider -- what kind of implications does that have?

***IL training does it need to be more than \$30/hour

***Issues with .30/mile on transportation -- Terry suggested .40 -- Gordon said maybe a flat rate amount for miles under a certain amount. Please come up with a plan/idea and give to Cheryl.

***Tools for work -- should we get a list of tools from employer?

***Co-funding -- combined with VR and VA-VR cannot exceed tuition fees books -- we will still provide our VR allowance. Does that wording need to be changed?

***Sign Language Interpreters -- our amount of \$25 is lower than what schools pay them -- This amount was just updated in January. Mark will talk to Pat more about this but likely won't change as we just updated it -- Comments were that computer translation will not work on initial training in employment settings you need an actual person for that -- computer one won't work

#2 Constant Contact -- Gordon

Gordon asked about Constant Contact and coming up with the 50 businesses. Gordon was curious if offices have to do Constant Contact or is it a choice?

Discussion:

Offices don't have to do this but if we do we will need around 50 businesses to get it going.

It's just a resource or way to get VR's name out there without a lot of work.

In Omaha where it was piloted, they put in as many as they could come up with and then monitored who actually opened the email. Once they monitored for a bit they deleted those contacts on the list that were obviously not interested in the emails.

There is an unsubscribe button inside the email so if a business no longer wanted the email they would just have to click that to get the emails to stop.

Next Step:

If an office is interested in Constant Contact they first need to start with gathering the names/emails of businesses then the next step will be to with Sarah on how being trained on the program.

#3 – Social Security as an Assessment Service vs. Plan Service-- Deb

Discussion:

Deb felt she was able to get the answer already. Her office was seeing lots of individuals in overpayment whose benefits were affected by going to work. The reason she found this was happening was that at Social Security there was a staffing issue that resulted in less staff reviewing cases and due to their delays clients went into over payment status. This caused individuals to lose other resources such as housing, food stamps, etc.

Next Step:

There wasn't really a fix for this as it is out of our control. It is something to make sure though that staff remind clients on Social Security that they should always submit income documents and be aware how behind that office could possibly be and to put their assistance aside if they feel they should not have gotten benefits due to income amounts.